

# FACTSHEET

## *Veterinary Services*

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

December 1995

## National Animal Health Monitoring System:

### A Tool for U.S. Animal Agriculture Information Management

Risk analysis...quality assurance...outbreak responsiveness...global marketplace. These relatively new concepts typify modern agriculture and represent expanding obligations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In 1983, APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) initiated the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) as an information-gathering program to address these and other challenges.

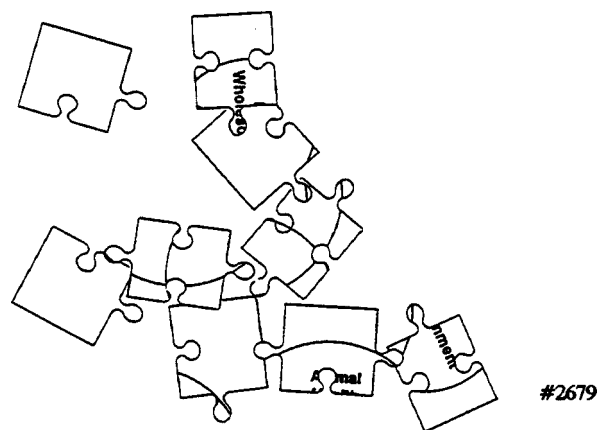
APHIS has succeeded in controlling or eradicating many domestic diseases and preventing foreign diseases from becoming established in the United States. These successes have enabled the agency to target endemic diseases, microbiologic pathogens, and health problems related to environmental, genetic, and management factors. Together, these problems make up a complicated, many-faceted puzzle of animal production.

Multiple data sources, including Federal and State animal and public health agencies, universities, diagnostic laboratories, producer groups, and private interest groups, provide vital pieces of the puzzle. NAHMS is one of the tools APHIS is using to organize the pieces.

### Adding Value to Existing Data

NAHMS helps to make use of data collected by other industry sources by compiling statistics and information. The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Reporting System is one example of this value-added approach. NAHMS compiles and interprets diagnostic reports from State veterinary diagnostic

laboratories to provide a timely assessment of trends and patterns in the United States. Another example is an ongoing monitoring system evaluating milk quality and udder health in collaboration with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and the National Dairy Herd Improvement Association.



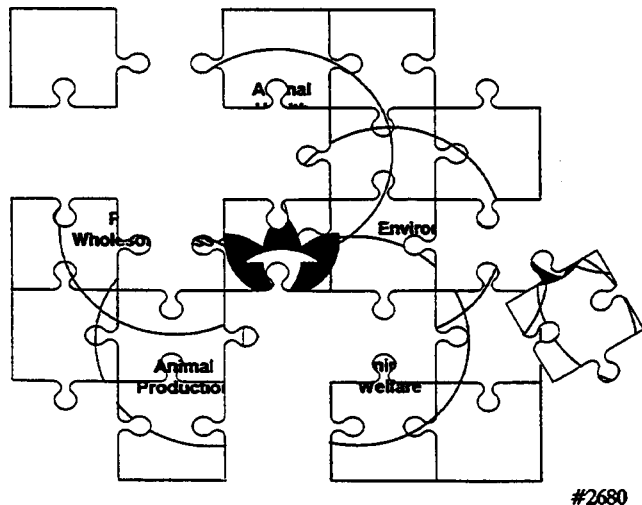
### National Studies

NAHMS serves as the impetus for Federal, State, industry, and university collaboration to gather fresh information to fill data gaps and identify more puzzle pieces. Through national studies, these multidisciplinary resources gather data and generate descriptive statistics on animal health, productivity, and management. By 1995, a total of 37 States had participated in at least 1 of 4 NAHMS national studies addressing pork, dairy, beef cow/calf, and beef feedlot production.

Technological advances have allowed NAHMS to use a broad range of data-collection methods, from onfarm interviews to such sophisticated techniques as computer-assisted telephone interviews. The same technologies allow for information dissemination through multiple means, including factsheets and statistical summaries, multimedia presentations, and electronic transmission over worldwide computer networks. Technology has also improved timeliness of information delivery.

Baseline information from NAHMS studies remains accessible to support and accomplish a wide range of short- and long-term analyses as needs

dictate; for example, identifying associations between *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7 and calf management. Data are also used to address emerging issues, such as the 1993 outbreak of *Cryptosporidium parvum* in Milwaukee, WI, and a 1994 outbreak of acute bovine viral diarrhea disease.



## Solution—A Team Effort

The completed animal health puzzle shows APHIS' commitment to address all factors affecting U.S. animal agriculture: health, environment, animal welfare, livestock and poultry production, and product wholesomeness.

Solving the puzzle will require an integrated and coordinated approach within the animal production industry. NAHMS exists as a champion for collaboration, utilizing risk assessment, management, and communication techniques to quantitatively and qualitatively estimate risk factors affecting animal health, food safety, public health, and the viability of U.S. agriculture both domestically and internationally.

For more information, contact:

Centers for Epidemiology & Animal Health  
 USDA:APHIS:VS, Attn. NAHMS  
 555 South Howes, Suite 200  
 Fort Collins, CO 80521  
 Telephone: (970) 490-7800  
 Internet: NAHMS\_INFO@aphis.usda.gov

## Ongoing Monitoring

NAHMS collects additional data through low-resource, ongoing monitoring projects that provide trend information, such as one involving somatic cell counts (indicating milk quality) initiated in 1994. Additional ongoing and national studies will be introduced periodically on both active and new animal species.

